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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Cindy Giese. I am a former elementary school secretary and current food service director at Lewistown Public Schools. I am here as a proponent of House Bill 479.

In my twenty plus years working in the public school system, I have come to realize the strong association between good nutrition and successful students. Six years ago when our district made the decision to go to grade level elementary schools, breakfast was offered at only one of the three buildings. My staff and I saw the need to expand our program to include all elementary students. We now have a successful and growing breakfast program for all students K-12. This expansion project was completed with the financial help from a community foundation, parent/teacher groups, breakfast startup grants from OPI and mini-grants from Team Nutrition. Our administration was supportive but school kitchens are often at the bottom of the "food" chain in districts, if you will, for the available dollars necessary for these kinds of expenditures. Kids need a healthy, nutritious start to their day if we expect them to learn, achieve, test, and become successful in our world today. New math books, an updated reading curriculum or the current technological tools are a moot point if teachers do not have students that are ready to learn. I believe that providing students with healthy, nutritious meals at schools is one of the

easiest and most economical methods of empowering them to reach their full potential.

In anticipation of all day every day kindergarten and the lack of space to house those classrooms, our district is looking for off site space. For school food service, that would, of course, perpetuate an increase in participation and it's benefits of revenue, commodity entitlement dollars and healthy meals for students but it would also perpetuate the need for additional transport equipment, kitchen licensure, facility upgrade to accommodate preparing additional meals, and replacement of existing outdated and non-reparable equipment. School food service personnel are committed professionals that will go the extra mile to see that children are fed properly but are sometimes at risk using unsafe equipment in less than satisfactory surroundings.

House Bill 479, as proposed, would offer 50 districts in Montana the opportunity to change and improve their food service operation that would in turn empower our Montana students to learn, achieve, perform and be successful in this fast paced world of today.

Mr. Chairman, a copy of my comments is being submitted to you.
Thanks you for your time.